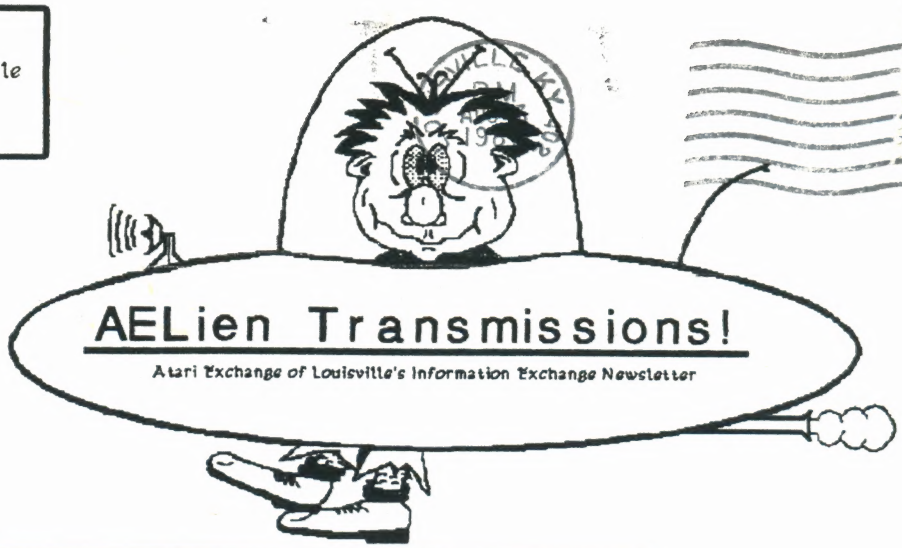
From:
Atari Exchange of Louisville
P.O. Box 34183
Louisville, Ky. 40232



AELien Transmissions!

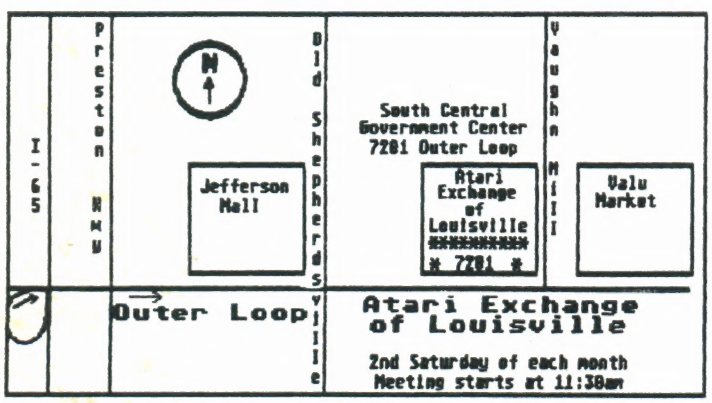
Atari Exchange of Louisville's Information Exchange Newsletter

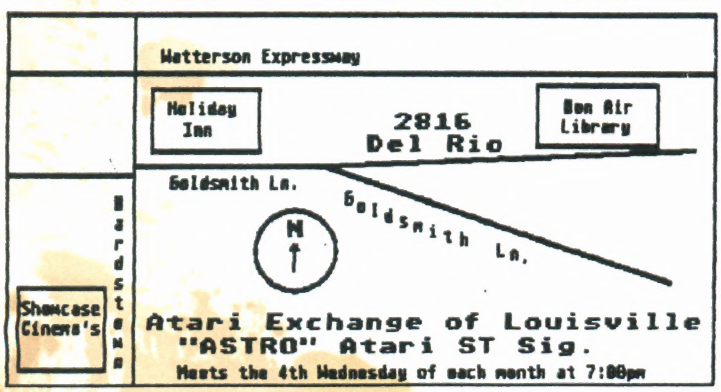
To:

Jersey Atari Computer Group (JACG)
R.P. Mulhearn Jr.
8 Crescent Rd.
Pine Brook, New Jersey 07058

August 1987

Atari Exchange of Louisville





Topic of the month:

Turbo Basic

Articles included:

Turbo Basic command list

Reviews:

Turbo Basic
Flight Simulator II version 1.1
Flight Simulator II Scenery disk #7 (East Coast)
Flight Simulator Adventures book
Midi Maze

DC Sig meetings are the 1st Wednesday of the month 7:00pm at the Bon Air library. An 8-bit Sig.

AELien Transmissions is published monthly by and for dues paying members of the Atari Exchange of Louisville. All contents are public domain (except advertisements) and available for duplication provided proper credit is given to the AEL and the author. AELien Transmissions is shared on an exchange basis with any other Atari User Group. A monthly subscription is available to nonmembers for $8.75/year.

The Atari Exchange of Louisville is not affiliated with the Atari Corporation. The articles contained in this newsletter are the opinions of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the officers or the group.

Any dues paying member of the Atari Exchange of Louisville may submit an article to the editor for publication. The deadline for submission is the last Saturday of each month. Articles may be edited and/or published at the discretion of the editor. Articles are best handled when submitted on disk or uploaded via modem. Get them to Jack Link, 7501 Sunset Lane, Crestwood, KY 40014 or send to the Atari Exchange of Louisville's ATARI SCENE BBS at (502) 964-2924. AtariWriter, ST Writer or ASCII format is preferable.

Atari Exchange of Louisville Officers

President:	*Don Garr*
VP Coordination:	*Bobby Jackson*
VP Membership:	*Jerry Badger*
Treasurer:	*Whittie Vance*
Secretary:	*Jody Estes*
Librarian	*Chryel Oliver*
PD Librarian:	*Lloyd Bromwell*
Newsletter Editor:	*Jack Link*
BBS Sysop:	*Rich Link*

Business Meeting

The Business Meeting for the Atari Exchange of Louisville is held on the 2nd Saturday of each month at the Central Jefferson County Government Center, 7201 Outer Loop, Louisville KY. The library opens for returns at 11:00am and the meeting begins at 11:30am. Dues for one year are $20.00 per person/family. Membership includes monthly issues of AELien Transmissions (not mailed), access to the AEL software library, and priveleged access to the ATARI SCENE BBS.

DCSig Meeting

The DCSig meets on the 1st Wednesday of the month at the Bon Air Library, 2816 Del Rio Place at 7:00pm. This group is now becoming the place to discuss the Atari 8-bit computers.

ASTRO Sig Meetings

The ASTRO Sig meets to discuss the latest on the ST line of Atari computers. Meetings are held the 4th Wedensday of each month, at 7:00pm, at the Bon Air Library on 2816 Del Rio Place. For additional information contact Jack Link at (502) 241-6678 or on the ATARI SCENE BBS.

I'd like to thank Don Garr for the great artwork on the cover of the newsletter this month. Don used a combination of Degas Elite and Publishing Partner to come up with a quite impressive display.

AELien TRANSMISSIONS

The Information Exchange Newsletter of the Atari Exchange of Louisville

President's Viewpoint

It was a pleasantly peaceful dream I was enjoying, that Saturday morning in July, forgetting all about any of the problems which normally prey on my sanity. I had used little or no judgement the night before when I stayed perched in front of my computer screen for hours on end selfishly dragging my tired bloodshot eyes deep into the reckless hours of the morning. Anything could have been happening in the world, or even inside my house for that matter, and I wouldn't have known about it for I was catching my second wind at sawing a giant Sequoia log and planning on overtime!

I was truly dedicated to the task of sawing the whole forest into sawdust and getting ready to start on another giant Sequoia when, right there in the middle of the forest, ...the phone rang?

Apparently tired from my vigorous sleep, it took great determination and effort to fumble my way to the phone receiver which sits right next to the bed. Sounding terribly incoherent I answered the call. It was AEL officer Bobby Jackson calling to let me know about a couple of things I needed to do before the meeting which would start in a couple of hours. It was a good thing for that forest that Bobby called when he did.

Before I could even get back to my dedicated task the phone rang again. This time, answering with a slightly more coherent voice, I found it was AEL officer Paul Moore calling. Paul was bearing bad news and it didn't take me long to wish I was back in the forest again.

It seems we were caught in an unfortunate situation which defied an easy solution. Paul filled me in on everything while I struggled to come to my senses. We finally reached a point where we both agreed and decided to go with it, right or wrong.

It was really depressing to have the day start off like that and what made matters worse was that there were no indications that it was going to get any better.

Opening the floor for nominations at the meeting didn't lend itself towards making my day either. But then the pieces started falling into place. Chyrel Oliver volunteered for Librarian, Bobby Jackson volunteered for V.P. Coordination and we already had nominee's for all the other offices... except President.

Finally recognizing and realizing the levity of the situation and feeling the burden of responsibility weighing heavily upon my shoulders (not to mention the .38 special pressing deep into my side) I made a 6 month snap decision... I ran for reelection. Since then I've been reaping the rewards of my decision. The threatening phone calls have stopped, there are no more dead animals on my front door step and my family has been returned to me. It pays to be "The Pres"!

Please do your best, as I will, to welcome these volunteers, whether they're serving another term or they're coming in as new officers; for they have volunteered to spend a great deal of time serving you with no expectations of getting anything in return except gratitude. I believe that deserves at least a few positive comments on your part. Go out on a limb... say thank you to the hard working officers of the AEL.

Next month our topic will have a slightly different twist, so watch for it and I'll see YOU at the meeting.

THE ENDLESS CYCLE

by Jack Link

I can remember all too well those early days as a new member of the AEL. The officers would constantly remind the membership of the need for articles for the newsletters. Of course being rather new and inexperienced to Atari computers, I had a feeling of deficiency at the ability of telling those much more involved how to get the most out of the machine or the best programs available. Needless to say, I didn't spend my time burning up the keyboard writing articles (I don't think I had bought AtariWriter until several months later).

Now the shoe is on the other foot, for I am now the Newsletter Editor for the AEL and it is my turn to BEG for articles. In the several years I have been a member, I have come to realize that we have many members who COULD write articles but still remain reluctant to do so. Whether it is a lack of confidence or discipline is difficult to say, but the ability and experience is out there.

So how do I get people involved? It is likely that Don Garr will continue his 'Topic of the Month' program and search out members who have shown experience or interest in thoses areas. And Charles Crowder has indicated he will continue writing for the ST group. I want to get a little additional variety though, by occasionally making an individual reqest from a member to write an article for some future newsletter. The topic will be at the draftee's choosing rather than the club's.

Now please don't quit coming to the monthly meetings in an effort to evade my possible request! If you felt that strongly about not writing, I would surely let you off the hook. I think though you will feel a sense of pride and accomplishment after you see your article in print.

I appreciate your confidence in me to fulfill this role as your Newsletter Editor and hope we can together produce something with purpose and pride. We will be trying to dress up AELien Transmissions with more visual displays as the months pass. Please feel free to discuss with me any ideas or thoughts that you feel will make the newsletter more useful and informative or presentable. It really is a team effort and involvement is what makes this thing come together. Hope you enjoy the coming editions!

MEETING MINUTES

by Rich Link

The July meeting brought with it another round of elections. Unfortunately, the slate of candidates was not full, leaving our president in a kind of a predicament. Due to some unfortunate circumstances, the ballot had no candidate for President or for Librarian. Paul Moore explained again the duties of the librarian. After due consideration, Chyrel Oliver volunteered to run for the office. (Thanks Chyrel!!!) Clay Crouch and Rick Willias agreed to assist Chyrel in the duties.

Don Garr then offered to rerun for president, even under the threat of severe penalties from the current First Lady! Bobby Jackson volunteered to run for VP Coordination, thus filling out the slate. Since there was only one candidate for each office, Mark Stroud moved that all officers be elected en masse. The move was unanimously accepted by the members. For the 1987/88 term, the officers will be:

Don Garr.....President
Bobby Jackson....VP Coordination
Jerry Badger.....VP Membership
Jody Estes.....Secretary
Whitie Vance.....Treasurer
Chyrel Oliver....Librarian
Lloyd Bromwell...PD Librarian
Jack Link.....Newsletter Editor
Rich Link.....BBS Sysop

With the election over, we moved on to more pleasant business. BLAZING PADDLES for the 8 bit computers and REGENT BASE for the ST have been ordered. The purchase of PUBLISHING PRO and NEWS STATION programs for the 8 bits was discussed but it was decided to write to the program's publishers for additional information. In lieu of purchasing a program called WINDOWS, a public domain program called GEMDOS is available in the PD library and will soon be available on the Atari Scene BBS.

Rich Link gave some information about new things on the BBS, particularly the addition of download file descriptions in the Library section of the BBS. There is also a new AEL information page and a policy statement regarding uploads of magazine

programs will be online soon. Paul Moore requested that all outstanding library programs be returned even though the library was not present. Don Garr announced that the Basic SIG would discuss TurboBasic for the XL/XE computers.

The topic of the month was INTERFACES. Don brought along his ill fated MPP Plug'n Print and his half finished Atari 850 (should that be 425?) interface. Rich Link gave a quick explanation of the capabilities of the ICD MIO with 256k or 1M ramdisk, serial/parallel ports and a SCSI compatible port.

For the Coup De Grace, Don brought along his nightclub act: a 520 ST, Roland synthesizer and Activision's Music Studio Software. It was obvious to all that the truly talented members of the group were all electronic (although Don plays a mean mouse button!). Music can be composed using either the keyboard of the ST or of any MIDI compatible synthesizer. It was quite a serenade.

Finally, Lloyd Bromell presented a plaque of appreciation to Don for his service to the AEL for 1986/87.

BBS Report

by Rich Link

As many of you know, I have taken over duties as BBS sysop of the ATARI SCENE! Although it's at a new location, the number is still the same and it's still up 24 hours a day.

I have been making a few changes, but in general, why mess with a good thing? Overall, the board seems to run well. Some improvements are being made in the [L]ibrary section. The 8 bit PD files are divided into 3 sections, Utilities and Applications, Fun and Games and the Audio/Visual Department. By separat ing into groups, the printouts become more managable and you don't have to wade through a stack of programs you aren't interested in. Of course you can still hit the [B]rowse function and get a full listing of online titles.

We hit a milestone this month on the SCENE! when Chyrel Oliver, our new librarian, was the 10000th caller. I have it on good authority that she stayed up all night waiting for just the right time.

Well, that's all for this installment. Be sure and give the board a call. The number is:

ATARI SCENE BBS
(502) 964-2924

This issue of AELien Transmissions is being produced using EASY DRAW on a 520 ST. In an effort to improve the appearance of this rag, I would be happy to hear your comments and suggestions.

The use of pictures or 'clip art' as they are sometimes called, would be a welcome addition to the current all text format. If you have any artistic ability and developed your own prictures or have some PD 'clip art' files that are compatible with EASY DRAW, by all means get with me at a future meeting or contact me on the ATARI SCENE BBS.

And of course we always need good articles to keep AELien Transmissions interesting and informative. So don't be shy and think you have nothing to offer. There may even be an article from some other club's newsletter that you found worth sharing with our members. Sit yourself down at that keyboard and allow the prose to flow from your fingertips.

TURBO BASIC

Reviewed by Don Garr

Turbo Basic is the most fantastic piece of software I have ever seen hit public domain. Why it's public domain I'll never understand. This is a basic programming language that I would have gone out and paid cold hard cash for. This thing's sharper than bee's buns!

Turbo Basic incorporates a lot of those extra's you always wanted but knew you'd never get. For instance:

1. Totally compatible with Atari Basic. So all you're existing programs will work just fine.

2. Fixes for some of the bugs in Atari Basic.

3. Requires 1603 less bytes of memory than Atari Basic.

4. Most DOS utilities built right into Basic.

5. 3-5 times faster than Atari Basic.

6. Can accept upper/lower/or inverse characters for most commands.

7. Incorporates structured programming commands such as PROCEDURES, DO-LOOPS, WHILE-WEND, etc...

8. Graphic commands that automatically draw circles and ellipses.

9. Commands that will run binary programs (DOS Option L).

10. Allows the use of line labels and procedures.

11. Enhancements to sound routines.

12. Easy time delays with a one word command.

13. Single commands to clear the screen, print numeric variables to disk, fill color, get error # and error line # and search for string data within a string.

14. Prints a description with the error number.

15. Can use MS-DOS style of input with text prompt.

16. Will allow TRACEing during program execution.

17. It will also DUMP all program variables to screen, printer or disk showing dimensioned size and actual size.

In short, where else could you find so much for so little?

Turbo Basic comes to us from Holland and is an outstanding addition to anyone's public domain collection. A basic compiler has also been developed for Turbo Basic which will turn your programs into lightning fast binary programs. From what I've read it'll compile almost anything. The only thing I remember it had trouble understanding were 2 nested NEXT statements following only 1 FOR statement. Example:

```
10 For X=1 to 50
20    Pause 50
30    If X > 24
40       Rem Print count down
50       ? 50 - X
60       Next X
70    Endif
80    ? "Not half way yet"
90 Next X
```

Turbo Basic has so many added features that I find it very difficult to try and touch on all of them, so I've included a reprint from a corresponding user group's newsletter that does a really good job summing up the enhancements. Remember that Turbo Basic is compatible with Atari Basic so the list that follows only shows additional capabilities.

The only problem I really have with Turbo Basic is it's incompatibility with Sparta DOS. And the original version would only run on XL/XE's, but they have since developed a version for the Atari 800. Oh well, I guess it had to have some kind of problem with it. Look over the following article and "Read em and rejoice".

This article has been retyped by Don Garr as a reprint of an article from the STATUS (Southside Tidewater Atari Technical Users Society) newsletter of Virginia Beach, Va.
Compiled and Translated by
Dave and Laura Yearke

Turbo Basic Command List

In case you've just landed from Mars, or just plain haven't heard yet, Turbo Basic is the exciting new Public Domain Basic interpreter that we received from the Atari Users Group in Holland. It works on the XL or XE series of Atari computers. It's almost too good to be true and should be a definite must for all XE or XL Atari owners. Turbo Basic, in addition to offering 42 more command and 22 more functions than Atari Basic, gives the user 1809 more bytes of program space by "hiding" part of itself under the XL/XE's operating system. It also runs 3 times faster than Atari Basic, includes most DOS commands, has advanced graphics and programming function, and is insensitive to lower case or inverse characters for most commands.

Note: Commands are in the following format:

Name Syntax Description

Disk I/O

BLOAD Bload"D:name" Binary loads file "name" (DOS option L with /N).

BRUN Brun"D:name" Binary load and run file "name" (DOS option L).

DELETE Delete"D:name" Deletes the file "name" (DOS option D).

DIR Dir Disk directory (DOS option A).

DIR Dir"Dn:*.*" Directory of drive n. Note wild card extenders may be used.

LOCK Lock"D:name" Locks the file "name" (DOS option F).

RENAME Rename"D:old,new" Renames the file "name" (DOS option E).

UNLOCK Unlock"D:name" Unlocks the file "name" (DOS option G).

Graphics

CIRCLE Circle x,y,r Plots a circle with center at x,y and radius r.

CIRCLE Circle x,y,r,r2 R2 is an optional vertical radius for true circles or ellipses.

CLS CLS Clears the screen.

CLS CLS #6 Clears screen opened in channel 6.

FCOLOR Fcolor n Determines fill color

FILLTO Fillto x,y A fill command analogous to the BASIC commands "POSITION x,y: XIO 18,#6,0,0,"S:"

PAINT Paint x,y Another type of fill command, this one is a recursive routine that will fill any closed object as long as x,y are inside it.

TEXT Text x,y,a$ Bit-blocks text in a$ at x,y.

DPOKE Dpoke m,v Pokes location m,m+1 with 2-byte integer v (0 <= v <= 65536).

MOVE Move m,m1,m2 Block transfer; moves m2 (number of bytes) from starting position m to new starting position m1.

-MOVE -Move m,m1,m2 Same as Move but copies starting with the last byte of the block.

BPUT Bput #n,adr,len Block Put; Same as For I=0 to Len-1:Get #N,A:Poke(adr+I):Next I

BGET Bget #n,adr,len Block Get; Same as For I=0 to Len-1:Get #N,A:Poke (adr+I):Next I

%PUT %Put #n,a Until now, there was no convenient way to put numeric values onto disk or cassette files other than by using PRINT, which converted them to strings first, a slow and cumbersome process. %PUT puts the number to the device "as is" in 6-byte FP format.

%GET %Get #n,A Get a number stored with %PUT from the device and store it in variable A. Again, this is much faster than using "INPUT #n,A".

Structured Programming

REPEAT Repeat Start a REPEAT-UNTIL loop.

UNTIL Until <c> Terminate when condition <c> is met.

WHILE While <c> Start a WHILE-WEND loop to end when condition <c> is met.

WEND Wend Terminates a WHILE-WEND loop.

ELSE Else Optional extension for IF. The IF condition must not be followed by a "THEN", but terminated by end-of-line or colon.

ENDIF Endif Ends an IF-ELSE-ENDIF or IF-ELSE condition. Note that this allows an IF condition to span more than one BASIC line, provided the "IF" statement is structured without the THEN statement.

DO Do Starts an "infinite" DO loop.

LOOP Loop Cycle back to the start of a DO loop.

EXIT Exit Exit a DO-LOOP loop.

PROC Proc name Start definition of procedure (something like a subroutine).

ENDPROC Endproc End definition of procedure return to point of branching.

EXEC Exec name Execute procedure name. Branch to a procedure.

General Programming

PAUSE Pause n Pause processing for n/50 seconds.

RENUM Renum n,i,j Renumber the program starting at line n, first number is i, increment is j. This function will handle GOTO's, TRAP's and all other line references except those which involve variables or computed values.

DEL Del n,i Delete lines n-i

DUMP Dump Display all variables and values. For numeric arrays, the numbers are the DIMed values plus one. For strings, the first number is the current LENgth of it and the second number is the DIMed size of it. DUMP also lists procedure names and labels with their line values.

DUMP Dump name Dump to device name, such as "P:" or "D:DUMP.DAT".

TRACE Trace Trace program during execution.

TRACE - Trace - Trace mode off (Default).

DSOUND Dsound n,f,d,v Form of SOUND which activates channel-pairing for increased frequency range.

DSOUND Dsound Turns off all sounds.

GO TO Go to n Alternate form of GOTO.

*L *L Turns line-indenting on (default).

*L- *L- Turns line-indenting off.

*F *F (or *F +) Special mode for FOR...NEXT loops which corrects a bug in Atari BASIC. Seems that in Atari BASIC, an "illegal" reverse loop like "FOR X=2 TO 1:PRINT X:NEXT X" will execute once even though the condition is met initially (X is already greater than 1). Turbo BASIC fixes this bug, but leaves it available for Atari BASIC programs which may take advantage of it.

*F- *F- Turns off the special FOR...NEXT mode to make Turbo BASIC act like Atari BASIC.

*B *B (or *B +) Command which allows the break key to be trapped via the "TRAP" command within a program.

*B - *B - Turns off the special BREAK key mode.

-- -- Special form of REM which puts 80 dashes in a program listing.

Line Labels

name Assigns the current line number to the label name. This is a convenient way to get around the problem of renumbering when using variables as line numbers. Labels can be thought of as a special form of variable, as they occupy the variable name table along with the "regular" variables. We also believe that the number of variables allowed has been increased from 128 to 256 to allow for the addition of these labels.

GO# Go# name Analogous to the GOTO command.

Modifications

CLOSE Close Close channels 1-7.

DIM Dim a(n) Will automatically assign a value of zero to all elements of the numeric array being dimensioned, and null characters to all elements of a string (the LEN is still variable, however, and initially zero).

GET Get name Wait for a key press, assign the value to name. Same as "OPEN #7,4,0,"K:":GET #7,name:CLOSE #7".

INPUT Input "text";a,b... Prints text as a prompt before asking for variable(s), same as Microsoft BASIC.

LIST List n, List program from line n to end.

ON On a Exec n1,n2... Variation of ON...GOSUB for procedures. N1, n2 and so on are names of procedures to be run.

ON On a Go# n1,n2... Similar to ON...GOTO except that line labels are used instead of line numbers.

POP Pop This command now pops the run time stack for all four types of loops.

PUT Put n Same as "PRINT CHR$(n);"

RESTORE Restore #name Restores the data line indicated by the label name.

RND Rnd Parentheses are no longer needed at the end of this command, but it will still work if they are there.

SOUND Sound Turn off all sounds.

TRAP Trap #name Traps to the line referenced by the label name.

Turbo Basic Functions

Arithmetic/Logic

HEX$ Hex$(n) Convert n to hex string.

DEC Dec(a$) Convert hex string A$ to decimal.

DIV n Div i Integer quotient of n/i.

MOD n Mod i Integer remainder of n/i.

FRAC Frac(a) Fractional part of a.

TRUNC Trunc(a) Truncates fractional part of a.

RAND Rand(a) Generates random number 0-n.

$ $nnnn Allows input of hexadecimal numbers, but they are converted to decimal. Ex. "FOR i=$0600 TO $067F" => "FOR i=1536 TO 1663".

& n & i 8-bit boolean AND.

| n | i 8-bit boolean OR.

EXOR n EXOR i 8-bit boolean Exclusive-Or.

Memory

DPEEK Dpeek(m) Double PEEK of m,m+1. Peeks 2 memory locations.

TIME Time Time of day (numeric).

TIME$ TIME$ Time of day string, HHMMSS. Unfortunately, the time commands don't work properly because they were written for European Atari's which operate at 50hz, instead of 60hz like American ones, the net result being that they gain 12 minutes each hour.

INKEY$ Inkey$ Returns last character typed.

INSTR Instr(x$,a$) Returns relative location of start of string A$ within X$ (returns 0 if not found). The match must be exact; strings with the same letters but differences in case or type (normal or inverse) will not be found.

INSTR Instr(x$,a$,i) i specifies the starting point of the search.

UINSTR Uinstr(x$,a$) Same as INSTR, does not distinguish between case or inverse characters. Ex: UINSTR("HeLlO","hello") returns 1.

UINSTR Uinstr(x$,a$,i) Specifies optional starting point.

ERR ERR Value of last error number. Same as "PEEK(195)".

ERL ERL Line # last error occurred at.

Constants

%0 %1 %2 %3

These four constants simply stand for the numbers 0-3, respectively. The difference with using these in a program is that "X=1" requires 10 bytes, whereas "X=%1" only needs 4 (numbers require 7 bytes, 6 for the number plus an identifier preceding it. It is always a good practice to make variables for numbers that are used more than three times in a program.)

Notes:

1. Variable, Procedure and Label names may contain the underscore "_" character.

2. To print a double-quote (") in a text string, use tow of them together, instead of the Atari BASIC method of using CHR$(34). Example:

"TEST";CHR$(34);"TEXT" becomes "TEST""TEXT" in Turbo BASIC, both of which produce the output = TEST"TEXT.

3. Upon initial boot-up, Turbo-BASIC looks for a BASIC file named AUTORUN.BAS. If it finds an AUTORUN.BAS file, it will automatically load and run it. (Turbo BASIC is named AUTORUN.SYS).

4. Turbo BASIC also prints out English descriptions of all errors, including several new ones for errors involving the new commands.

5. An example of a multi-line IF statement:

```
10 IF X > 10
20    PRINT X-10
30   GO# TOO_BIG
40 ELSE
50    PRINT X
60    GO# X_IS_OK
70 ENDIF
```

Note the use of line labels in the GOTO statements.

Error Codes

Error 22 ?NEST	Loops not properly nested.
Error 23 ?WHILE	WEND with no corresponding WHILE.
Error 24 ?REPEAT	UNTIL with no corresponding REPEAT.
Error 25 ?DO	LOOP with no corresponding DO.
Error 26 ?EXIT	EXIT is outside a LOOP.
Error 27 ?XPROC	Error executing PROCedure.
Error 28 ?EXEC	ENDPROC with no corresponding EXEC.
Error 29 ?PROC	PROCEDURE does not exist.
Error 30 ?#	Label does not exist.

Also Error 15 has been expanded to include an UNTIL which relates to a REPEAT which has been deleted.

ASTRO Sig

Atari ST Resource Organization

by Jack Link

The July meeting may not have come off if it hadn't been for the resourcefulness of Don Garr in getting us into the building. Once settled in though, we got down to discussing a little business and program demos. Yours truly presented the roster of names of those members elected to serve for the 1987-1988 term in the AEL. Also, Don Brock has agreed to have the ST library available at the AEL business meetings held the second Saturday of each month. This will be an additional opportunity to turn in or check out programs. Thanks Don for giving us this added time for the library.

Charles Crowder and Louis Kuhl have offered to put together various PD disks to be made available to members for a small copy fee. If we can get the disks fairly quickly, we should have some disks at the next meeting.

For your entertainment, K-Switch and MidiMaze were demonstrated. K-Switch is a desktop accessory that allows a 1 meg ST to be partitioned into two machines (at least from a software point of view. Of course it eats a lot of ram and won't always work with a particular program, but it is neat to switch between Flash and ST Writer with the press of three keys.

Next, Charles Crowder and I linked our STs together for a little MidiMaze. This program finally gives me a use for a midi cable considering my lack of any musical ability. It really should be a hit.

Prior to the meeting breaking up, there was a request for the club to consider purchase of PC-Ditto. Because no official vote was taken, it will be presented to the group either at the business meeting or our next sig meeting.

At the next meeting, I would like someone to put on a presentation centered around drawing programs and picture files for the ST. If you have a good working knowledge of the ST picture formats and programs, why not drop me a line so we can have an informative program for our next get together. See you Wednesday, August 26th at the Bon Air Library.

STate of the Software Art

by Charles E. Crowder Jr.
Contributing Editor - ASTRO SIG

Well, it's time for another presentation in the this review of ST software. This month, I am looking at Flight Simulator II version 1.1 and several spinoff products that have become available for it.

Flight Simulator II version 1.1

Flight Simulator II has been one of the top sellers for any computer which it has been produced. This has held true for the ST as well. In the past there have been a few problems with it. These were mainly:

1) Lack of joystick control
2) Different versions to support monochrome and color
3) Copy protection
4) Limits on user databases
5) Inaacuracies in the simulation (i.e., never running out of fuel,etc)

With this new release, SubLogic has corrected three of these problems. Joystick control has been implemented along with mouse control and the keyboard. Both monochrome and color are now supported on the same disk. The program detects which monitor is connected and loads the proper program module. For hard disk users, the copy protection is now gone, so loading from a hard disk is now supported. For those who use the multi-player mode, the ADF can now display the direction to the other players plane while the DME will indicate the distance. The autopilot can also be used to lock onto the other plane and bring you together.

Having used the new version since mid-June, I can say that the joystick mode is long overdue, but like the mouse takes some getting used to because the joystick movements are sequential rather than random as with the mouse. If you are in a hard left turn and wish to center the control, you must start the movement before the aircraft is too far into the turn or you will over-control the aircraft trying to compensate for the slow joystick movement.

The other problems in the simulation have not been cured yet. The editor requires that the aircraft already be in the air or you will crash as soon as you exit the editor for inflight maneuvers. The limits on the user defined databases still exist, and it is still possible for the pilot to fly around the world forever without running out of fuel.

While these problems are minor and detract very little from the enjoyment of the program, I hope that SubLogic will correct these obvious flaws in the near future.

If you haven't received notice of the upgrade and still have version 1.0 of the ST version of FSII, send your original disk to SubLogic at the address on the back of the product box and mark the envelope 'ST VERSION UPDATE'. The update is free and takes about 2-4 weeks.

Rating: ****

Flight Simulator II Scenery Disk #7

This is the first scenary disk released for the ST (#11 has since been released with SubLogic promising more on a once a month schedule). This release covers the East Coast from New York (exclusive) south to the Florida Keys (inclusive). The scenary is improved over the master disk and is more like the scenary available on the STAR scenary disks for the 8-bits. It is fairly detailed althought the graphics are still blocky. The data for the scenary on this disk takes up a singlesided disk and includes a shuttle on Launch Complex 34A, several gantries for earlier space launches and the gigantic Vehicle Assembly Building built for the Apollo Moon shots and now the building where the shuttles are stored and mated for final assembly. Washington shows the White House, Capitol, Pentagon, Washington Memorial, and several others. The list of sights is too lengthy to list but this disk is worth the price for those who like to fly the simulator.

Rating: ****

Flight Simulator Adventures

for the Macintosh, Amiga, and Atari ST

This book is a collection of adventures that are designed to challenge the FSII pilot and range from fairly easy to very hard. The book explains how to set up the adventures and is very similar in tone to the earlier books available for the 8-bit systems and the IBM PC and Compatibles. It covers several flaws in the different versions of FSII available for the above systems and includes the maps for the users of the Microsoft version which has incomplete charts. This is one of four new books available from Compute Publications that cover FSII and some of the other flight simulators available. The others are more general, teaching you how to navigate on instruments, etc. and will be covered in a future article.

The main part of this book is a series of adventurers that you must complete in order to move on as each one is designed to train you to do a particular thing, from navigation to landing. Admittedly, you have to have a good imagination, since you are placed in situations that cannot be simulated, from a skyjacking to a prison break.

A good book whose appeal is mainly to the FSII addict. If you fit this catagory, this book is a must have for your library.

Rating: ***

MidiMaze by Hybrid Arts

The last item I will cover this month is the latest craze on the ST market. It is MidiMaze from Hybrid Arts Software. This is the multi-player program that has held the attention of thousands at Comdex and CES for the last year. It runs on any ST with at least 512K of RAM and requires the RGB monitor and two Midi cables.

Xanth F/X has a real winner with this program. This is the same group responsible for those stunning 8-bit and ST graphics demos over the last couple of years. MidiMaze can by played by one or more players with a maximum of 16 players (this is the limit of the color registers in low-resolution).

With one player, you first tell the computer that you are playing alone since the system will boot up as a slave system. You then set the other factors, such as number of computer players and their intelligence level (from dumb to dangerous), number of hits to kill, and what maze you wish to play. After that you must run around a 3-D maze looking for the other players. The players are represented by different color 'Happy Faces'. These are those silly circles with the smiling face and the logo 'Have a Happy Day!'. At the top of the screen you have a Happy Face that loses it's smile as you get hit by the others. A game consists of 10 rounds and the number of rounds won by each player is shown by the scale between rounds and the number of hits scored is shown during play. Location of the other players is shown on an overhead map display before play. The same map shows the location of the player during the game without showing the others.

While the single player mode is fun and can provide a challenge, the multi-player mode is the best. As more players get involved, the challenge heightens with each player out to kill the others. Play is similar to the solo mode, without setting up the computer players.

I demoed this program at the July ASTRO meeting and can report that everyone played the game at least once and several played the game until it was time to leave. It was extremely popular and will be demoed at the August AEL business meeting.

Rating: *****